



**Middlesex County Workforce Investment Board Meeting
Tuesday, January 28, 2014, 9:00 AM**

PRESENT: Gloria Aftanski, Manuel Biagas, Roseann Bucciarelli, Lorrie Ginegaw, Adrienne Keaton, Tom Lankey, Sr., Maryann Lovas, Dawn Lystad (representing Brian Loughlin), Iris Monicon, Joseph Picone, Peter Reno, Robin Ritter-Ceriello, Senovia Robles, Ginny Romeo, Kathy Shaw, Michelle Suskind, Joanne Vogel, Earl Wiggley, Henrietta Wilson (representing Angela Mackaronis)

STAFF: Jane Brady, John Ross, Nina Rios-Rivera, Melinda Walton

GUESTS: Susan Pasternack

Call to Order:

Earl Wiggley, substituting for WIB Chair, Jill Schiff, called the meeting to order. Notice of this meeting was made pursuant to the Open Public meetings Act, NJSA 10:4-10.

New Board Member, Susan Pasternack, Director of Volunteer Services, Raritan Bay Medical Services in Perth Amboy and Old Bridge was introduced, welcomed and thanked.

MINUTES OF PRIOR MEETING:

The minutes of the last meeting held on October 29, 2013 were submitted for approval. Maryann Lovas made a motion that the minutes be approved as written: Tom Lankey seconded and the motion carried.

INTRODUCTIONS:

Jane Brady introduced the following individuals:

- Melinda Walton from the Office of Workforce Development as the replacement for Patti Seip.
- Manuel Biagas is the new ES manager in the New Brunswick One. Manuel is new to our Board but is familiar with One Stops since he was a member in Vineland.

UPDATE ON WIB RE-CERTIFICATION PROCESS

Jane Brady informed everyone that we had all the paperwork in by January 14 as required and we are now waiting to see if we are recertified. We have no “cautions” or “incompletes” so we see no problem.

PERFORMANCE MEASURE REPORT FOR PROGRAM YEAR TO DATE

Jane Brady pointed out that on the Performance Report it is all good news. It shows that we “meet or exceed” all our goals. We have two quarters left to the Program Year and we are meeting our goals now. For example it shows that we achieved 107.41% of our goal by having 78 of 98 of our Adult clients enter employment. Our goal was 74.10% and we had a 79.59% performance rate.

ONE STOP OPERATOR REPORT – Adrienne Keaton

Our goal for Adult and Dislocated Workers for Occupational Training is 560 for this program year and as of the end of December, which is half of our year, we had 283 so we are on target to meet our goal.

There is concern over how the lack of the Unemployment Insurance Benefit extension will affect our ability to enroll people. If a person has no income, they may not be able to take advantage of our training but may have to find any kind of job in order to have some income. We are hopeful for a restoration of those benefits because that would work in our favor.

There has been a change in our One Stop New Brunswick Office. Manuel Biagas is now the manager and he has already implemented many changes to our benefit. There have been 333 walk-ins served since he took over a few months ago. They can look over job orders and have more information immediately available and meet with staff to help with their job search.

Jersey Job Club is the main vehicle used in the One Stop Center. It is a state requirement that clients participate in at least two enrichment workshops during their membership but Mr. Biagas hopes to have them participate in all five of the Enrichment Workshops we offer. (*The Core Workshops are Orientation, Job Search Skills, and Basic and Advanced Resume Writing. Enrichment Workshops are Interviewing Skills - 2 part, Networking Skills - 2 part, Skills Based Volunteering and Changing Employment Landscape.*) The 55+ participants are calling people with reminders of the workshops in the hopes of increasing attendance. There has been an increase in the activity in the New Brunswick One Stop and the number of people attending that need extra help.

PLACEMENT REPORT – Jane Brady

The Placement Report shows the success our top 15 schools have in placing the people they train. All but three of the schools are above the 70% required rate. Letters asking for a corrective action plan will be sent to the three schools. Ms. Brady is pleased with all but those three and acknowledged that our staff works in partnership to help the schools achieve these rates. The system does give us credit for a placement even if the placement is not in the field for which someone was trained. It is just counted that they found a job. Earl Wiggley noted that this is the essence of what we do and that even being above a 50% placement rate is commendable at this time.

LITERACY COMMITTEE REPORT – Gloria Aftanski

Gloria Aftanski had four informational and one action item to go over.

- There are three new Alternative High School Tests in New Jersey to replace the old GED. No contracts have been signed yet and the test cannot be offered until a contract is in place and each Board of Education has approved the test and centers. The companies offering the tests are: Pearson Education, ETS and McGraw Hill.
- We are concerned because the Learning Link participation has been low, especially in Perth Amboy. We had been trying to improve the enrollment by steering clients to it instead of the Adult Learning Centers, but have seen people staying for many weeks when the Learning Links were intended for short term help. We will now have appropriate people go to the Adult Ed programs for more intense help.
- There is now a contract in place with Middlesex County College for a Conversational ESL Program for our WIA eligible clients. It will start on February 3 and will be for 20 hours a week.
- The State has released new notices of funding opportunities for Literacy. These grants are primarily for curriculum development and back office activities. We are not aware of any groups in the County who have applied for these grants. We know that Middlesex County College did not. If anyone knows of a group applying, please let Jane Brady know.

LITERACY GOALS

Jane Brady opened the discussion by asking if there were any questions on the goals that had been sent ahead of time to all members in anticipation of a vote being taken on them at this meeting. It will be the last set of goals we have to approve for this year.

Earl Wiggley officially asked for any questions and asked for a motion to approve the Literacy Goals as written. The motion was made by Kathy Shaw and seconded by Roseann Bucciarella. A vote was called and the motion carried.

Mr. Wiggley then raised the question of when the students would be ready to take the new “GED” exams. Senovia Robles responded that she thought it would probably be in March. Signed contracts are needed by each center and then it has to be set up. Pennsylvania is going with the McGraw Hill version. Jane Brady mentioned that we have no idea how many will pass because we do not know the curriculum yet. New Brunswick is going to use the McGraw Hill version and the ETS version. No one in New Jersey has selected the Pearson version which needs a computer lab set up. Most are going with McGraw Hill but no one is testing currently. Earl Wiggley questioned whether the WIB could take any sort of action on this and Jane Brady responded that the Department of Education is in charge of this and does not work directly with the WIB.

Senovia Robles remarked that she believes that the Science and Social Studies components are going to be difficult to pass and a Secondary Education Teacher will need to teach the classes for these subjects. Henrietta Wilson inquired about the cost of the tests and asked if someone could pay to take it a second time. Senovia Robles said it was \$94 and said that they can retake parts of the exam if they fail. Mrs. Brady noted that they could retake the exam one time at no cost. It costs \$20 for a partial retake. Ms. Wilson asked if there was a time frame and was told that it was open with no limits set. An applicant may NOT combine sections of more than one version of the test in order to pass it in the whole but they could pay and start over completely with another brand of the exam.

Henrietta Wilson raised the concern of the \$500 lifetime limit for each applicant and wondered if we had any funding for non-welfare clients. Jane Brady said we only pay for Youth to take the exam, not Adults.

Earl Wiggley said it sounds complicated and that the Literacy Committee should revisit this topic.

PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT – Roseanne Bucciarella

Strategic Plan Recommendation Chart: The Workforce Investment Board has already approved the Strategic Plan, but the plan itself has not been approved by the State yet. Some work toward our goals is ongoing and some has not yet been started.

Jane Brady told us that they SETC will tell us in February whether or not they approve. When we find out, we will send an email to everyone. Since Nos. 5 – 10 are designated as responsibilities of the State, she is curious as to whether or not they will accept them but does expect the entire plan to be approved. Any suggestions are welcome because this is an ongoing process and it is not a static document.

YOUTH INVESTMENT COUNCIL REPORT – Earl Wiggley

GED Celebration: We held a GED Celebration on January 14 at Middlesex County College for some of our Youth clients who recently passed the GED and received their Alternative High School Diploma. There were 33 who passed and 11 of them attended the celebration. Mr. Wiggley thought it was one of the best graduations you would want to see. It was well thought out and executed. Jane Brady also thought it was phenomenal and one of the best nights of the year. The caps and gowns are an important part of the celebration to them. Gloria Aftanski wondered what their plans are now. Mrs. Brady told her that we look to put them in training so they can learn a skill so they can get a job. Joanne LaPerla Morales promoted Middlesex County College and told them they should continue their education. Mr. Wiggley mentioned that one youth already had a job, two had enrolled in the college and many of them knew what they want to do.

Jane Brady noted that we are having some trouble meeting youth goals. The goal is to serve 175 Youth from July 2013 to June 2014. We are now at 110 which is a little below target. The staff is recruiting and we get them in, but they do not always follow up on what they need to do and the family is not always cooperative, especially with paperwork. Besides being “poor” they must also have other barriers to employment in order for us to serve them. There are things set up for them but sometimes they do not show up and their family does not encourage or help them. It was mentioned that there is a Youth Investment Council Meeting scheduled for next week and this will be taken up then.

Earl Wiggley proudly shared some MCWAG success stories of five youth who participated and how we helped them with the transition into jobs. One way is that we encourage employers to hire them by paying their salary for three months, pay to up \$2,000 of their salary for the next three months and then have the company can take them on as regular employee and pay them themselves. During this transition we have a job coach that helps them acclimate to a work situation. Since most of them have no work experience it is hard to find a job, so by having us pay, an employer might give them a chance. We are always looking for companies to participate in this program.

BUSINESS OUTREACH COMMITTEE REPORT – Kathy Shaw

Ms. Shaw gave an update about the new County Portal. It will be central place for businesses to find where industry sites are located and will contain information about location, sale information, market data, demographics, traffic counts. It will be a way for someone with a business plan to find a location that will be good for their business or for an investor to get information about sites for their purposes. Before this portal, we had no digitized data to even start this challenging task. Now it will be gathered together and available on the County website 24/7. There will be a lot of data in one place. Information about hotels, retail sites, parks etc. will be available. It will help with tourism, Workforce and Economic Development for the County as a whole. A sort of “Economic One Stop” helping both small businesses and large investors.

The County is announcing a large GIS initiative with a new team leading it and eliminating redundancy in data. Ms. Shaw said it took a long time to get it up and running because she wanted to make sure it was a good product before launch. Now, if anyone needs data, they can get it. Our site will give a “skeleton” and then someone could go to Costar for researching more sites. We are reinventing ourselves so our older sites can come together.

Jane Brady mentioned that it is something that everyone here can use. It has a lot of availability of information to County people. Kathy Shaw stated that it took a lot to gather all this information. Third parties were used such as MOD4 data, Costa and Tax Maps. This portal will allow people to export the data so they can use it in ways specifically for them. It will allow them compare specific parcel locations and data sets. Some municipalities have never put this information together for themselves so this will help with having municipal portals for economic development and business because it can be seen by municipality. We hope to have a maintenance group to oversee the external data. At the next meeting we would like to have a demonstration of the portal.

Business Resource Unit Update – Nina Rios-Rivera

Everyone was updated on the new Business Resource Center brochure and folder. A copy was given to everyone in attendance and will be sent to anyone who was not at the meeting. She asked if anyone had any questions and to let us know if they needed any more information.

Ms. Rios-Rivera said that over the last six months we have been trying to encourage our customers to use the resources we have available such as Jobs 4 Jersey. The State is encouraging them to do self-entry of job orders but we have seen less use of recruitments which could be because of the slow job growth or because self-entry does not make a company aware of the possibility of a recruitment opportunity. We have sent a letter to companies we have dealt with in the past to encourage them to use our services. We will also target some companies off the Master List for this encouragement also.

Our outreach to employers has had an increase from last year with 193 new employer contacts bringing us to 835 overall and 81 new profiles in the master database. The Department of Labor Business Action Center of the State has a new program called Salesforce and we are helping to keep it up to date. It is a way to see all dealings such as grants incentives and discussions held with a company. It will hopefully become a good tool but we still need to use the old systems, requiring us to input the same data into 3 systems.

We have run 18 seminars at the One Stop and the libraries and have had a slight uptick in placements. We have terminated the Job Developer contract with Middlesex County College and we will go back to paying the same “placement benchmark” based on positive placements we have with other vendors. A training session took place with our vendor placement personnel to make sure they meet their contract requirements which include a minimum of

work hours and wages and stressing the importance of Jobs 4 Jersey and uploading a resume. It was well received and we hope to have a positive outcome.

We have an agreement with SCORE of Princeton which is a group of corporate executives willing to run seminars about information for entrepreneurship for the self-employed. We are offering six week sessions with various topics related to that during every quarter of this year. The SBBC and other organizations continue to work with the Business Development Unit Staff.

Jane Brady mentioned our goals and need to outreach to businesses. She brought up the point that on Jobs4Jersey a job seeker's resume does not come off automatically after a certain period of time which is not good for employers who reach out to the seekers only to find they are no longer searching. The State thought that this tool would be in place, the same as for job postings that automatically come off after 90 days, but it is not.

A comment was made about municipalities looking for companies located locally. Usually this is gotten through the Code Enforcement area because it has information about the local companies and has specific contacts and updates. Nina Rios-Rivera noted that the towns will not always cooperate when asked for that kind of information. Kathy Shaw asked if there was any way she could help with that. Codes tell how a company defines itself. It is ever changing and we need to look at what we get out of it. There is no consistency in the industry sector changes, employers, sales information and job growth.

Kathy Shaw mentioned www.statsamerica.com as an online search site. It is a comparison of where industry sectors are located and has advanced search mechanisms. Jane Brady noted that the State doesn't even have this information available. We requested information from the State about companies with 10 or more employees. Hundreds of letters were sent, but many came back undeliverable. The list is subject to its last update.

WORK FIRST NEW JERSEY – John Ross

John Ross mentioned that we had a new staff person, LaShonda Byrd, who has transferred from the Office of Transportation and continues to be the Transportation Coordinator. The Transportation Coordinator receives referrals from Middlesex County Board of Social Services and our own case managers for TANF clients who need transportation to WFNJ activities or employment. The Transportation Coordinator researches mass transit options and provides instructions to the TANF client. If mass transit options do not exist, the Transportation Coordinator arranges for transportation through our shared ride system with A.A.A. Taxi.

The RFP for Work First New Jersey for Program Year 2014 will be going out within 30 – 45 days and will be competitive.

The Work First Program will be monitored from late February to late March. A report of findings will be available at the next WIB meeting.

There have been some changes in how transportation is provided for WFNJ. General Assistance clients (single adults on welfare) are only advised of mass transit availability. They do not receive shared ride services.

As a result in the Perth Amboy and New Brunswick programs, General Assistance clients report to Employment Services for four weeks once they apply, but services have been reduced to one day a week. The staff works with clients on resumes, competencies, and soft skills. Clients then work with County staff to complete job search logs and are reviewed for accuracy and appropriateness.

SETC RESPONSE TO MAY LETTER – Jane Brady

Jane Brady told everyone that we still do not have a response to a letter we sent in May 2013 concerning the data from the Federal Government regarding income level and self-sufficiency. This Board refused to accept these numbers. Our concern is that those numbers do not work in our area and need to be changed. The SETC didn't take it up yet but will discuss in at the March meeting which she will attend. She will report back at the April 28 meeting.

Earl Wiggley then asked if anyone had any questions on any of the handouts in the folder and some were gone through with explanations.

- Jane Brady gave some explanations on the three pages showing Selected Industries with lost jobs broken down by County, State, and Region. It is disturbing to see 22.6% unemployment in Trade, Transportation and Utilities. Professional and Business Services, and Education, and Health Services were the highest in all three areas so Middlesex is not unique. It was noted that these figures only include those still on Unemployment Insurance not those who have stopped looking or who have lost that benefit.
- The "Recovery" report from Georgetown University was discussed
- There was also included in the packet a letter from the SETC saying that we passed or exceeded all performance measures for the last program year.

Jane Brady announced that we will be having the first job fair of 2014 on March 26 from 10 AM to 1 PM at the Holiday Inn in Carteret and to let us know if anyone knew of any companies that would be interested in attending. Another job fair would also be held in May at the Woodbridge Community Center.

Earl Wiggley called for a motion to adjourn which was given by Kathy Shaw and the meeting was adjourned.

It was noted that as soon as we hear about approval of the Strategic Plan members will be notified.

**The next meeting of the Middlesex County Workforce Investment Board will be on
April 29, 2014.**

Items sent before meeting:

Agenda
Announcements
Minutes of October 29, 2013 Board Meeting
Literacy goals

Items provided in meeting packet:

Agenda
Performance Report PY 13, 3rd Quarter
Letter from SETC regarding Performance Measures for PY 2012
“Recovery” article and letter from Georgetown University
Literacy Goals
Literacy Program Directory
MCWAG Success Stories
BRC Activities summary
BRC Packets
Small BRC Brochure
Jobs4Jersey card
One Stop Career Center Locations card
Strategic Plan Recommendations
Placement from the Top 15 Schools
Labor Market Information for 4th QTR for the County, State and Region

Items sent by email after the meeting:

WIB Workforce Development Data Report for PY ‘13